

Preparedness Planning Review

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Hurricane Keep Region Busy

It was business as usual and then in early September there were reports of a very powerful hurricane heading towards New Orleans, LA. The hurricane, named Katrina, arrives with much force in New Orleans as well as some cities in Mississippi. Many people have lost their homes and need to be evacuated. The cities of Lubbock and Amarillo were called upon to shelter some of the evacuees.

City of Lubbock

Four hundred and eight (408) evacuees arrived in Lubbock on September 4, 2005. All evacuees were triaged at the airport for urgent medical needs.

Those having serious injuries or illnesses were transported to the local hospitals. The rest of the evacuees were taken to Reese Technology Center (RTC), which is located approximately 6 miles NW of the city of Lubbock. RTC used to be an Air Force Base that was closed in 1992/1993. After arriving at RTC, the evacuees went through a security check, which was set up in the base theater.



After going through security, the evacuees were taken to the intake facility, which was set up in the gym. Here the evacuees received a needs assess-

ment and were directed to appropriate areas. For example, an individual indicating they were HIV positive were linked up with HIV counselors located in the intake facility. They were then directed to the medical clinic that was set up and manned by staff from Texas Tech University Health Science Center as well as volunteers from other agencies.

The medical clinic had an immunization clinic and a pharmacy so folks could receive necessary inoculations and prescription medicines. After the evacuees went through the entire

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By Dr. Connie Lindley

In the last issue of the *Preparedness Planning Review* it was mentioned that Health Service Region 1 (HSR1) will begin to utilize a new syndromic surveillance system. The new system, Syndrome Reporting Information System™ (SYRIS) will take the place of the Rapid Syndromic

New Surveillance System Coming to Region 1

Validation Project (RSVP).

SYRIS is a JAVA-based, platform independent system that runs on most PCs and laptops, and does not require a Web browser. SYRIS supports two-way disease information reporting and data sharing for medical professionals and school nurses.

Currently HSR1 has computers in twenty six (26) hospital emergency rooms

and approximately fifty four (54) schools throughout the region.

SYRIS provides a fast, reliable, portable method for reporting suspicious or novel symptoms that may be part of a known disease or disease-complex.

SYRIS functions mainly as a data integration tool: data from all SYRIS users is

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Second Hurricane Brings Evacuees Back to the Region

Hurricane Rita was a destructive hurricane that affected the gulf coast in Texas and Louisiana just weeks after hurricane Katrina. The citizens who evacuated for the first hurricane (Katrina) were forced to evacuate again for the second hurricane. Houston, Corpus Christi, Galveston, Beaumont/Port Arthur, and other Texas coastal cities were evacuated before the hurricane. Hotels all across the state were filled to capacity, as were special needs shelters.

The damage from the hurricane caused electrical power outages, gas shortages, lack of running water, and non functioning sewer treatment plants. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) along with many Emergency management officials across the state responded to these events. Of the populations evacuated, those with special needs, whether those needs were clinical or mental, proved to be the greatest challenge.

The DSHS Emergency Support Center in Austin was up and running from September 21-29, 2005 24 hours per day.

Because of this great effort, DSHS Central Office called for help from the DSHS Regional offices that were not directly affected by the hurricane. Five Health Service Region 1 (HSR1) staff were deployed to work with DSHS Austin Emergency Service Center and at the State Operations Center from September 21 to 30, 2005. These individuals gained valuable experience on state operations and requisition for Special Needs Shelters, oxygen containers, transportation needs, and other requests. This also enabled communication back to HSR1 on events and happenings occurring throughout the state.

Lubbock Operations

Eight planes landed with evacuees out of Harris County. Two more planes were scheduled to land at 11:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. A total of 771 evacuees were on the ground in Lubbock. 500 evacuees were shel-

very short notice was required to provide support to the City of Lubbock and the Reese shelter during the hours of 10 p.m. on the September 22, 2005 through 8:00 a.m. on the September 23, 2005.

"Storm Structure"

The process by which a disturbance forms and subsequently strengthens into a hurricane depends on at least three conditions. Warm waters and moisture are mentioned above. The third condition is a wind pattern near the ocean surface that spirals air inward. Bands of thunderstorms form, allowing the air to warm further and rise higher into the atmosphere. If the winds at these higher levels are relatively light, this structure can remain intact and allow for additional strengthening.

The center, or eye, of a hurricane is relatively calm. The most violent activity takes place in the area immediately around the eye, called the eyewall. At the top of the eyewall (about 50,000 feet), most of the air is propelled outward, increasing the air's upward motion. Some of the air, however, moves inward and sinks into the eye, creating a cloud-free area.



tered at Reese Technology Center, which was the capacity of the Reese facility. 247 were sheltered at the Lubbock Coliseum which has a maximum capacity of 300. Special needs were as follows; 8 were hospitalized, 5 required dialysis, 16 were placed in nursing homes and 7 required respite care.

Plans were if the Coliseum became full the following shelters had been identified; Lubbock Civic Center (1200 maximum), Gaston Hall at Texas Tech (250 maximum), Posey Elementary School (35 maximum), City of Plainview (75 maximum), Lubbock Christian University (500 maximum). Reese shelter received HSR 1 support. A call down with a

The City of Lubbock operated and staffed the shelters opened at Reese Technology Center and the Coliseum. Lubbock, in conjunction with Lubbock Regional MHMR and the Red Cross, made all arrangements to transfer special needs patients back to the facility and/or area they came from. Lubbock sent 8 bus loads of evacuees back to Houston on September 25, 2005 and they arrived in the morning at 7:45 a.m. Lubbock made arrangements to fly back some medically fragile evacuees to Baytown. Lubbock, working with local authorities in the receiving area, ensured it was okay for evacuees to return to

Baytown and that they have medical needs attended to.

No additional evacuees were received in Lubbock after September 26, 2005. The nursing home folks, received on September 26th, were returned to Baytown on Tues-

day, October 4th. No other evacuees remain in Lubbock.

Amarillo Operations

One plane landed with 167 evacuees. One additional aircraft was expected but did not arrive. Most of these evacuees were sheltered at the Amarillo Civic Center. Special needs were as follows; 3 patients on ventilators, 3 medical/surgical patients and 1 on dialysis. The shelters met all special needs.

HSR 1 Canyon staff met with Medical team and local health authority, Dr. Pierce, to coordinate medical response for the evacuees. There was a conference call between medical team

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HSR 1 Staff Participates in Statewide SNS Exercise

The Health Services Region 1 (HSR1) Public Health Preparedness (PHP) and Epidemiology Response Team (ERT) staff participated in a two (2) day statewide exercise designed to test the state's ability to respond to a large-scale public health emergency with an emphasis placed on the state's ability to effectively request, manage, and deploy Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) assets.

The exercise included the direct involvement/participation of Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Regions 2/3 (Arlington), 4/5 (Tyler), 6/5 South (Houston), and 7 (Temple). In addition, DSHS staff were pulled into participate in the exercise from the other DSHS regions throughout the state.

HSR1 staff served in a wide range of capacities during the exercise including:



- Controller/Observers
- Public Information Officer(s) in HSR 2/3 Command Center
- Patient Volunteers
- Receiving, Staging and Storing (RSS) Leads at the RSS
- Community Resource Leads

HSR 1 staff found that the exercise reflected many strengths such as, Off-loading of the SNS was completed in record time at the RSS (36 minutes) and security was handled extremely

well and efficiently at the Regional Command Centers, dispensing sites, and the RSS. All participants exhibited a willingness to work together as a team in order to accomplish the overall objectives of the exercise. The exercise also established that there is room for improvement and the After

Action Reports provided by all participants proved to be beneficial to everyone.

For more information on SNS you may contact Claudia McQueen at 806-

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members, local health authorities, and three major hospitals every 4 hours to give updates and relay needs. This continued until September 26, 2005 when no further evacuees were deployed to Amarillo.

HSR1 Canyon Office and switchboard was opened to assist with contacting Regional hospitals for bed and ICU capacity to address forward movement of patients if necessary. Regional staff contacted hospitals and provided updates on number and condition of evacuees and acquired info from each hospital at least twice a day. HSR1 also provided communication resources so hospitals could call in with updates and/or to ask for information.

Amarillo closed its shelter on September 26, 2005. The Red Cross gave gas vouchers to purchase fuel for those that arrived by car. Those that arrived by air were loaded onto

a Continental Flight to be flown back to Houston. The Red Cross in Houston met these evacuees and provided transportation back to their residence. There were 9 people that the Local Health Authority was concerned about having special needs. This included oxygen, wheelchairs and mental health issues. The Amarillo Local Health Authority contacted the Medical Command Center in Houston and relayed this information to them so they can provide assistance when these folks arrive back in Houston.

Both Amarillo and Lubbock provided facilities and equipment to house evacuee's pets.

For more information on DSHS HSR1's response to the Rita efforts please contact Dr. Lindley at 806-655-7151/806-767-0484 or email: connie.lindley@dshs.state.tx.us.

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summarized for HSR1 to view as temporal graphs and map layers. SYRIS greatly facilitates identification of epidemic disease factors and locations, and also provides a means of distributing medical alerts to all SYRIS users.

Remember, Syndromic surveillance is a wonderful tool for monitoring potentially infectious syndromes, however it is only as good as the data provided to us. We need to continue to encourage our schools and hospitals to enter their syndromic data.

DSHS HSR1 appreciates everyone's commitment in making the transition to the SYRIS program as effortless as possible.

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intake process, they were given ID badges, taken by bus to shower facilities and then transported to the shelter area, everything being located at RTC. Some points of interest: Lubbock City and the American Red Cross were operating the facilities at RTC. The facility has a capacity to handle up to 590 evacuees. If more than that arrive, plans were to shelter them in the Lubbock Coliseum, which can handle approximately 500 more.

Social Services agencies were present at RTC to provide needed services. Lubbock City held a job fair on site at RTC for the evacuees. Texas Tech University Health Science Center manned a medical clinic on site from 6 p.m.—9 p.m. Covenant Health Care provided a mobile dental unit to address dental emergencies.

DSHS HSR1 staff in the Lubbock Regional Office provided support at the facility over the weekend. There were 142 individuals identified as special needs clients and all of their needs were met. As of September 14, 2005 the Lubbock shelter closed as all those in the shelter have been relocated to relatives or available housing.

City of Amarillo

Amarillo received 127 evacuees on September 4, 2005. These individuals went through a similar process that took place in Lubbock. They were being sheltered in the Amarillo Civic Center, which has a capacity to handle 500.

Medical staff was provided by the local hospitals, Texas Tech Health Science Center in Amarillo, local physicians, nurses, and medical staff in the Amarillo area. All Red Cross volunteers and medical staff were credentialed prior to entering the facility. Amarillo had some folks with special needs but family and friends picked them up to address their needs. According to Amarillo, none of the remaining 115 evacuees had any special needs.

DSHS HSR1 in Canyon was involved with Katrina activities beginning Friday, September 2, 2005 through the next week. Activities included: Meeting with the Medical team and local

Medical staff was provided by the local hospitals, Texas Tech Health Science Center in Amarillo, local physicians, nurses, and medical staff in the Amarillo area. All Red Cross volunteers and medical staff were credentialed prior to entering the facility. Amarillo had some folks with special needs but family and friends picked them up to address their needs. According to Amarillo, none of the remaining 115 evacuees had any special needs.

Amarillo shelter closed at approximately 8:00 p.m. on September 13, 2005 as everyone had been relocated to relatives or adequate housing in the area.

Overall, at least three conference calls were held daily with Disaster District Committee/Emergency Management, DSHS State Operations Center, DSHS Epidemiology Response Team, Immunizations, and others through out the week. Region responded by providing nurses if needed, communication equipment, Public Information Officer, DSHS liaison officer and other personnel and activities as requested. HSR1 Response went well in both areas. Region 1 was in constant communication with the Emergency Operations Centers in each location via email or telephone. Any needs or issues that came up were quickly addressed. Also, both Amarillo and Lubbock provided facilities and equipment to house evacuee's pets.

For more information on DSHS HSR1's response to the Katrina efforts please contact Dr. Lindley at 806-655-7151/806-767-0484 or email: connie.lindley@dshs.state.tx.us.

